

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE  
BILL ANALYSIS**

**Bill No: HB 17**

**48th Legislature, 2nd Session, 2008**

**Short Title: NMSU Communication Disorders Programs**

**Sponsor(s): Representative Jimmie C. Hall and Others**

**Analyst: Eilani Gerstner**

**Date: January 19, 2008**

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**Bill Summary:**

HB 17 appropriates funds to the Board of Regents of New Mexico State University (NMSU) for FY 09 for expansion of student clinical studies and practicum programs for communication disorders in the Department of Special Education and Communications Disorders.

**Fiscal Impact:**

\$250,000 is appropriated from the General Fund. The bill contains a reversion clause.

According to the Higher Education Department (HED) analysis, the University of New Mexico (UNM) and NMSU submitted a collaborative request for \$600,000 to HED; however, funding for this initiative was not included in HED's recommendations for FY 09.

According to HED, the proposed funding in HB 17 is for a graduate degree program that requires 52 credit hours and takes two years to complete. The Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) notes that HED's evaluation table of FY 09 research and public service projects provided to the LFC classifies this project as a breach of the Higher Education Formula.

**Issues:**

According to NMSU, students in NMSU's Communications Disorders Program who accept tuition and stipends under this project will be obligated to work in the public schools upon graduation. According to the NMSU bill analysis:

- Nationally, there is a growing need in the public schools for more speech-language pathologists (SLPs), and the shortage of qualified SLPs is a particular problem in New Mexico.
- Since services for communication disorders are mandated by law, schools without an SLP must provide services through external contracts, and contracted services cost New Mexico millions of dollars.
- The collaboration between NMSU and UNM will address the shortage of SLPs in New Mexico public schools through a two-fold approach that involves (1) expansion of existing, campus-based programs, and (2) extension of current programs through distance education.

Also addressing the SLP shortage issue is the UNM analysis of HB 16, the corresponding bill that appropriates funding for the same project at UNM, which says that according to a September 2007 survey:

- Las Cruces Public Schools had 14 SLP vacancies;
- Gadsden Independent Schools had eight SLP vacancies;
- Albuquerque Public Schools had 21 SLP vacancies; and
- the shortage is equally acute, if not worse, in smaller school districts.

Finally, HB 16 is a companion bill to HB 17, appropriating the same amount of funding for the same purpose to UNM for the Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences, and SB 28 is a related bill that covers the same request by NMSU.

**Related Bills:**

HB 16 *UNM Communications Disorders Programs*

SB 28 *Expand NMSU Communications Disorders Program*